

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 00722 210853Z

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ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SY-04 /016 W

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R 210647Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2728

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FOR SCA/SCS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC: ANTLES, PETER, HAMMATT, WILLIAM

SUBJECT: REPORT OF MISSING AMERICANS

1. BACKGROUND:

SUBJECTS, WHO WERE WALKING BLUE NILE RIVER FROM BAHIR DAR TO SHAFARTACK BRIDGE, A DISTANCE OF APPROXIMATELY 250 MILES, FAILED APPEAR AT PRE-ARRANGED RENDEZVOUS FOR SUPPLY DROP SUN MORN JAN 12. INFORMATION DEVELOPED DURING PAST WEEK LEADS US BELIEVE THEY MOST CERTAINLY IN TROUBLE, IF INDEED THEY STILL ALIVE.

2. SUBJECTS FIRST APPEARED AT EMBASSY MID-NOVEMBER REQUESTING LETTER TO ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY OF CULTURE EXPLAINING PROPOSED TRIP BY FOOT ALONG BLUE NILE GORGE. KNOWN EMBASSY STAFF WITH WHOM THEY DISCUSSED TRIP WERE CONSUL, VICE-CONSUL AND DEF ATT. ALL WARNED THEM OF DANGERS IN AREA AND STRONGLY ADVISED AGAINST TRIP. IN SPITE OF THIS, THEY PROCEEDED WITH PLANS, LEAVING ADDIS DEC 7 BY BUS FOR BAHIR DAR. DEPARTURE DATE FURNISHED BY PROPRIETOR SWISS HOTEL WHO REPORTED HE HOLDING CERTAIN BELONGINGS AND MAIL, AT THEIR REQUEST, UNTIL RETURN.

3. NEXT WORD FROM SUBJECTS WAS LETTER TO EMBASSY DATED DEC 23 FROM BAHIR DAR STATING THEY PLANNED COMMENCE TRIP NEXT DAY AND IF THEY NOT IN ADDIS BY FEB 5, WE WERE TO INFORM

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PAGE 02 ADDIS 00722 210853Z

AUTHORITIES AND REQUEST SEARCH OF GORGE, NOTE: AREA IS

EXTREMELY DESOLATE WITH NO ROADS OR COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, AND GORGE IS REACHABLE ONLY BY FOOT, RAFT, OR SMALL PLANE. 150 MILE STRETCH SEPARATES TWO MAIN VILLAGES, ALTHOUGH GROUPS OF NATIVES LIVE ALL ALONG BANK OF RIVER.

4. BEFORE DEPARTURE, SUBJECT HAD HIRED SERVICES OF PRIVATE AERO CLUB PLANE TO MAKE SUPPLY DROP MORNING JAN 12 AT INTERSECTION NILE AND TRIBUTARY APPROXIMATELY HALF-WAY BETWEEN BAHIR DAR AND BRIDGE. AMCIT PILOT MADE FLIGHT, CIRCLED AREA SEVERAL TIMES, SAW NO SIGN OF SUBJECTS AND RETURNED ADDIS. SUBJECTS HAD FLARES WHICH WERE TO BE USED AS SIGNAL IN ADDITION TO LARGE FIRE. PILOT REPORTED EVENTS TO EMBASSY AND LOCAL CID.

5. AT SAME TIME AS SUBJECT'S TRIP, 3-MAN EUROPEAN TEAM WAS TRAVELLING DOWN NILE ON RAFTS. FRIDAY JAN 17, WORD RECEIVED AT GERMAN EMBASSY HERE THAT ONE MEMBER HAD BEEN SHOT AND KILLED BY NATIVES MORNING JAN 12 AT CAMPSITE ON RIVER BANK. TWO SURVIVING MEMBERS HAD LEFT BODY AND CONTINUED 4 DAYS IN RAFT TO SHAFARTACK BRIDGE WHERE THEY INFORMED AUTHORITIES AND HITCHED RIDE TO ADDIS. CONSUL TALKED WITH ONE SURVIVOR WHO STATED THEY HAD NOT SEEN AMERICANS NOR HAD AUTHORITIES AT BRIDGE. SURVIVORS DID REPORT THAT ON LAST DAY BEFORE REACHING BRIDGE THEY APPROACHED BY NATIVES WHO SHOWED LETTER WRITTEN BY ANTLES DATED DEC. 31. IT STATED, TO BEST OF SURVIVOR'S MEMORY, AS NATIVES WOULD NOT GIVE UP LETTER, THAT SUBJECTS IN TROUBLE, DID NOT EXPECT TO COMPLETE TRIP, AND REQUESTED HELP FROM ANYONE WHO READ LETTER. SURVIVOR WOULD MAKE NO FURTHER STATEMENTS TO CONSUL OVER TELEPHONE. AS CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE LATE SUNDAY EVENING 1/2 HOUR BEFORE LOCAL CURFEW IT IMPOSSIBLE TO MEET WITH INDIVIDUAL. HE LEFT EARLY MORNING JAN 20 FOR BAHIR DAR ACCOMPANIED BY LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO WILL SPEND SEVERAL DAYS IN AREA ATTEMPTING LOCATE BODY RAFT TEAM MEMBER AND INVESTIGATING MURDER. WE INFORMED THAT OFFICIALS WILL AT SAME TIME ATTEMPT ASCERTAIN WHEREABOUTS OF AMERICANS OR ANY INFO CONCERNING THEM. GROUP EXPECTS RETURN ADDIS IN ONE WEEK.

6. HAMMATT LEFT FOLLOWING NAME OF NOK TO NOTIFY
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PAGE 03 ADDIS 00722 210853Z

IN EVENT OF EMERGENCY: JANE F. HAMMATT, 1534 MORRESON STREET, MADISON WISCONSIN, 53703, PHONE (608) 256-0453. ANTLES LEFT NO EMERGENCY NAME BUT AMONG MANY LETTERS BEING HELD FOR HIM IS NAME ANTLES, APT 3, 5313 CENTURY AVE. MIDDLETON, WISCONSIN, 53562.

7. ABOVE IS BEING FURNISHED TO DEPT AS WE BELIEVE EVENTS OF PAST WEEK (VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY NATIVES AGAINST ONE

FOREIGNER IN ROUGHLY SAME AREA AND SUBJECT'S PLEA FOR
HELP IN LETTER NOW 3 WEEKS OLD) PORTEND UNHAPPY ENDING
TO THIS DRAMA. WE RECOMMEND, HOWEVER, THAT DEPARTMENT
NOT REPEAT NOT NOTIFY NOK OF ABOVE AT THIS TIME UNLESS
DIRECT INQUIRY OR CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST DEVELOPS.
WE PROPOSE WAITING AT LEAST UNTIL INVESTIGATIVE PARTY
RETURNS FROM NILE IN ONE WEEK, AT WHICH TIME WE HOPE
HAVE MORE DEFINITE IDEA RE SUBJECTS WHEREABOUTS AND/OR
FATE.
WYMAN

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